

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

Living Streets' response to the Technical Consultation on Planning

Introduction

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk. We started life in 1929 as the Pedestrians Association and have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30 mph speed limits. Eighty five years on, we continue to influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk more, and provide specialist consultancy services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, and improve public health. We want to make sure that every community can enjoy the benefits of walking.

We are responding to the proposal in the Government's Technical Consultation on Planning to restrict local authorities' powers to set maximum parking standards. We strongly disagree with the way Government is privileging motorists and intervening in local matters on their behalf. Why should motorists be prioritised instead of needs of pedestrians or cyclists or bus users or train passengers? We all want to get from A to B comfortably and conveniently, we are all pedestrians, and we all use one or more modes of transport some or all of the time. The use of maximum parking standards and the use of on street parking management are essential to maintaining streets that meet the demands of *all* road users.

Question 2.16 – do you agree that parking policy should be strengthened to tackle on street parking problems by restricting powers to set maximum parking standards?

No. We do not agree.

Maximum parking standards are used alongside planning and transport policies to put the right development in the right place. For example, to encourage offices (which generate a lot of traffic) to locate where they can be accessed by public transport in town centres or close to major public transport interchanges. Where there is good infrastructure for walking and cycling, and good public transport provision, limiting the number of off-street spaces enables higher density residential development. This provides more space for housing and saves the cost of providing additional parking spaces. This supports the sustainability objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Retailers are not deterred from choosing town centre and city centre locations by the lack of parking. This is amply demonstrated by the return of supermarkets, such as 'Tesco Metro' or Sainsbury's Local back to our high street locations. In urban areas, maximum parking standards are part of a package of measures needed to make it safer and easier for people to walk more, cycle and use public transport – improving public health, reducing the emission of CO₂ and harmful particulate matter, transforming the quality of streets and public spaces and making the best use of the development land available.

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

More off street parking provision does not automatically solve on street problems because it is not impossible to enforce the use off-street spaces. All too often, garages are used for storage and in households with more than one car it can be more convenient to park on street than park two or more cars on the drive. Similarly, motorists will avoid using off-street paid for parking (private or council owned) if they can park on street for free. However, as to quote the British Parking Association “there is no such thing as a free parking space”. Charges are set at a level to keep demand at about 85 per cent capacity – any higher occupancy results in driver frustration and circulating traffic, whereas lower occupancy is an inefficient use of the space available and may not cover the operating and maintenance costs.

Managing demand for on street parking is not anti-motorist it is essential, for example, through on street parking charges and parking restrictions such as yellow lines or residents’ permit schemes. One need look no further than Aberystwyth: the removal of traffic wardens from Aberystwyth’s streets in 2011, before the council was ready to take over civil enforcement, resulted in road chaos. A minority of individuals keen to make their journey as convenient as possible took advantage of the situation and parked on double yellow lines, on pavements, in loading bays and disabled parking bays. This had a knock on effect on the town’s economy – visitors were unable to find parking; businesses were unable to receive or make deliveries; resulting double parking caused congestion and aggression.

Local authorities are best placed to establish what is appropriate for their area. Every place is different and parking standards must relate to local, urban and rural circumstances. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF requires councils to take account of:

- accessibility of the development;
- the type, mix and use of development;
- the availability of and opportunities for public transport;
- local car ownership levels; and
- an overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles.

The adoption of maximum standards will be an informed decision and is appropriate for many non-residential uses and for urban areas. Therefore, it is completely inappropriate, not to mention antithesis of localism, for Government to propose restricting local government powers to set maximum parking standards.

Living Streets wants the Government to tackle inconsiderate parking instead. We are calling on the Government to review the current regulatory framework around parking on the footway. We want the legislation for England in Wales to be the same as the legislation for London. Pavement parking is repeatedly highlighted as a major concern for our supporters and the general public. Poorly parked vehicles can force pedestrians into the road. They can inhibit the independence of many vulnerable people and be particularly dangerous for older people, for families with pushchairs and for those with visual or mobility impairments.

Note: for more informed response on this issue, Living Streets fully supports the response of the Local Government Technical Advisors Group.

For more details please contact:

Dr Rachel Lee – Policy and Research Coordinator

Email: Rachel.lee@livingstreets.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7377 4919